

Daniel's Vision Of The 4 Beasts: Part 1

Daniel 7:1-14

Intro: This morning we move from King Nebuchadnezzar's dream of four successive Gentile world powers in chapter 2 to consider Daniel's vision of four beasts in chapter 7. As we shall see, Daniel's dream here in chapter 7 corresponds exactly with Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter 2, but in a significantly different form—*ferocious animals instead of polished metals*. According to chapter 7 verse 17: "These great beasts, which are four in number, are four kings who will arise from the earth." Virtually all commentators agree that you have the same sequence of empires pictured in chapter 2 and 7.

Similarities between the dreams:

There are several remarkable similarities between Daniel's vision here in chapter 7, and the one King Nebuchadnezzar experienced back in chapter 2.

	Chapter 2	Chapter 7
1. Both are in four parts	<i>4 metals</i>	<i>4 beasts</i>
2. Both deal with 4 kingdoms	<i>Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome</i>	
3. Both dreams conclude with	<i>a 10-fold division (10 toes)</i>	<i>a 10-fold division (ten horns)</i>
4. Iron distinguishing feature of fourth kingdom in 2 & 7	<i>legs of iron</i>	<i>large iron teeth</i>
5. <i>Emphasis is placed on the fourth (Beast) kingdom in both chapter 2 and 7</i>		
6. Finally, both chapters 2 and 7 outline a succession of four kingdoms that will be destroyed and succeeded by God's eternal Kingdom. The striking Stone, Jesus Christ, will smash and put an end to the Gentile kingdoms when He returns to establish His own glorious Kingdom on this earth.		

Differences between the dreams:

While there are similarities between these two dreams in chapter 2 and 7, there are also several differences.

1. Who had dream?	<u>Chapter 2</u>	<u>chapter 7</u>
	<i>Neb, man of the world</i>	<i>Daniel, a prophet of God</i>
2. How did Neb, man of world, view these 4 Gentile empires?	<i>As a glorious majestic statue = human achievement</i>	<i>Daniel, as a man of God, viewed these 4 Gentile powers as ravenous beasts</i>

In chapter 2 we have man's view of human history, and in chapter 7 God's view.

Man looks on the outward appearance, while God looks on the heart. Mankind is viewed as wicked and cruel in God's sight, and as such are condemned to experience His coming judgment. Man's kingdoms will end with a Ten Nation Federation from which Satan's final world ruler, Antichrist, will come forth as an eleventh ruler. This final world ruler, Antichrist, epitomizes all that is depraved and demonic in the world kingdoms of mankind. God will smash the Gentile kingdoms with the Stone hurled down from heaven. The Stone, Christ the King, will then establish His Kingdom on earth, and rule from Jerusalem for a thousand years.

Lets begin by looking look at **The Revelation Of The Dream in vv. 1-8**

I. The Revelation Of The Dream (Dan. 7:1-14)

A. The vision of the four beasts (7:1-8)

1 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel saw a dream and visions in his mind as he lay on his bed; then he wrote the dream down and related the following summary of it.

Daniel says he received this vision in the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon. Belshazzar was made coregent with his father Nabonidus in 553 B.C. This would have been 14 years before the fall of Babylon in 539 B.C. described in chapter 5. *So, chronologically* this seventh chapter comes between chapters 4 and 5. God gave Daniel a revelation by way of a dream and visions in his mind as he slept. He got up and immediately wrote down a summary of the dream.

2 Daniel said, "I was looking in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea."

In his vision Daniel saw the four winds of heaven stirring up the great sea. The *four winds of heaven* is a reference to angelic forces through whom God controls and moves the nations of mankind (cf., Rev. 7:1). God is sovereign and exercises universal control over all the nation of mankind. He is likewise always watching over you and me.

The great sea pictures the masses of fallen humanity, and in ancient times referred to the Mediterranean Sea. The vision relates specifically to the nations of the Mediterranean world.

Daniel next sees four frightening beasts coming up from the sea, v. 3

3 “And four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different from one another. In the Bible, animals often represent kingdoms. Just as the eagle is a symbol for the United States and the lion represents Great Britain. The four beasts, as will be explained in verse 17, represent four successive Gentile kingdoms. These 4 terrifying beasts rise up in succession one after the other from the sea of Gentile humanity. Actually, as we saw in chapter 2, and will see again here, nation conquers nation.

First, Winged lion = Babylon (v. 4)

4 “The first beast was like a lion and had the wings of an eagle.

The first beast was like a lion, an animal symbolizing regality and strength. The lion represents the Babylonian empire. This lion had eagle’s wings, which speak of swiftness. The official symbol of Babylon was a winged lion. The prophet Jeremiah described king Nebuchadnezzar as “A lion who comes out of his lair; a destroyer of nations has set out” (Jer. 4:6-7, 13; Ezek. 17:3).

Daniel continues, I kept looking until its wings were plucked, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man; a human mind also was given to it.

This refers to Nebuchadnezzar’s chastening by God in chapter 4. Daniel had warned Nebuchadnezzar to repent and recognize that God in heaven rules. The prideful king refused to repent, and after a one year extension of grace, God struck him down. Nebuchadnezzar’s sovereignty was removed, and he was made to act and live like an animal for a period of seven years. At the end of the seven years, Nebuchadnezzar’s sanity was restored, and he acknowledged that the Most High God is the Sovereign Ruler in heaven and on earth. This spiritual transformation by God symbolized King Nebuchadnezzar’s coming to faith in the God of Israel.

Second, Bloody Bear = Medo-Persia

5 “And behold, another beast, a second one, resembling a bear. And it was raised up on one side, and three ribs were in its mouth between its teeth; and thus they said to it, ‘Arise, devour much meat!’
The second beast resembling a bear, represents the Medo-Persian empire.

A bear is less majestic and swift than a lion, but manifest tremendous strength and ferocity. Bears in the Bible are always vicious and ferocious. The Medo-Persians were like a bear in the advancement of their armies. They were slow moving and conquered by throwing millions of soldiers at the enemy.

The reference to the bear rising up on one side describes Persia's eventual take-over of the Medes. The Medes and the Persians initially joined forces, but Persia eventually became the dominant force by the time of King Xerxes fifty years later.

The three ribs in the bear's mouth refer to the three major conquests of the Medo-Persians under Darius, Cyrus and his son Cambyses: Lydia in Asia Minor fell in 546 B.C.; Babylon was conquered in October of 539 B.C.; and Egypt came under Persian control in 525 B.C. **The Persians reigned for 200 years, from 539 – 336 B.C.**

Third, Winged Leopard = Greece (v. 6)

6 “After this I kept looking, and behold, another one, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird; the beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it.

The third beast Daniel saw was like a leopard, an animal noted for its swiftness, cunning, and agility. This beast had four wings like a bird, stressing super-swift movement. Another feature of this third beast was that it had four heads, and dominion was given to it.

The leopard is a reference to Alexander the Great, who conquered Persia and its vast empire between 334 and 330 B.C. With only 35,000 Greek soldiers Alexander defeated the Persian army of well over a million men. His conquest of the known world of his day was accomplished with lightening swift precision. He set out at the age of 23, and after conquering the known world of his day, he died 10 years later at the age of 33. His conquest is without precedent in the ancient world. History attributes Alexander's great success to his military prowess, but in **Daniel 7:6**, it says this beast “was given authority to rule.” Now matter how brilliant Alexander was, his ultimate success was provided by God Almighty. **He rules over the affairs of mankind!**

The four heads on the leopard is a reference to the four major divisions of Alexander's empire following his death in 323 B.C. (Dan. 8:8, 22). His vast kingdom was eventually divided among his four generals. Cassander took Macedonia (Greek Peninsula); Lysimachus was allotted Thrace and Bithynia; Antigonus took Babylon and north Syria; and Ptolemy was given Egypt. The land of Israel was stuck in between Syria in the north and Egypt to their south, and was therefore ruled back and forth between the northern Selucid rulers and the southern Egyptian rulers.

Fourth, Non-descript Beast = Rome (v. 7)

Daniel next describes a fourth beast unlike anything he had ever seen v. 7

7 “After this I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed, and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.

This fourth beast was unlike anything Daniel had ever seen. This indescribable beast was more terrifying and powerful than the three preceding beasts, which were all ferocious and destructive. This frightening beast had large iron teeth with which it was able to crush and devour its prey. The empire represented by this mongrel beast was Imperial Rome, who had crushed and assimilated into itself the three previous empires Greece, Medo-Persia, and Babylon, (cf. Dan. 7:19).

Another significant feature of this fourth beast was that it had 10 horns. According to verse 24 they represent 10 kings who will rule simultaneously in the latter days. As Daniel focused his attention on the 10 horns, he saw another little horn begin to emerge among the ten, v. 8

8 “While I was contemplating the horns, behold, another horn, a little one, came up among them, and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it; and behold, this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth uttering great boasts.”

This little horn had an insignificant beginning but as it came up among the ten kings it was able to uproot three of the existing kings. This little horn was noted for its intelligence (it had the eyes of a man) and its

blasphemous claims (it had a mouth that spoke boastfully; cf. vv. 11, 20, 25). This little horn as we shall see next week, Lord willing, is a reference to Antichrist. The identity of this fourth beast and the little horn that rises up to rule is described in **verses 19-26: FOR NEXT WEEK**

The next thing Daniel's sees in his vision is the Ancient of Days taking His seat to begin dispensing judgment on this Christ-rejecting world, vv. 9-12

B. The Ancient of Days 7:9-12

- 9 "I kept looking
 Until thrones were set up,
 And the Ancient of Days took His seat;
 His vesture was like white snow,
 And the hair of His head like pure wool.
 His throne was ablaze with flames,
 Its wheels were a burning fire.
- 10 "A river of fire was flowing
 And coming out from before Him;
 Thousands upon thousands were attending Him,
 And myriads upon myriads were standing before Him;
 The court sat, And the books were opened.

This is the only place in the Bible where the Ancient of Days is mentioned. It is also the only verse in the Bible that pictures God in human form. Daniel visualized God as the eternal God who has existed forever. As He beholds God on His glorious throne He sees Him in His holiness. His white clothing and hair speak of His holiness (Rev. 1:14). Daniel's description of the glory surrounding the One seated on the flaming throne with wheels recalls the description of the glory of God Ezekiel witnessed (Ezek. 1:4-28). The thousands who surrounded the throne were God's servants, angels who execute His will. Daniel watched as God the Judge took His seat, and the court was convened, and the books were opened. Daniel saw God as the world's Judge. In Revelation 20:12 the opening of books refers to a review and judging of one's stewardship. God, who assigns power to kingdoms, will judge those kingdoms.

Daniel's attention shifted back to the little horn in vv. 11-12

11 “Then I kept looking because of the sound of the boastful words which the horn was speaking; I kept looking until the beast was slain, and its body was destroyed and given to the burning fire. 12 “As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but an extension of life was granted to them for an appointed period of time.

The little horn next began to spew blasphemes against the Lord. Daniel continued to watch until the antichrist was eventually destroyed by the Son of Man (Jesus Christ), who will be exalted by the Ancient of Days (God the Father). Daniel was greatly troubled by his vision and his face turned pale, yet he kept the vision to himself.

According to Revelation 19:11-21, Jesus Christ will descend from heaven in a display of resplendent glory (cf. Matt 24:29-31) and He will destroy the Gentile armies of the nations, after which He will take hold of the Antichrist and his false prophet and throw them alive into the eternal lake of fire. This event will terminate “the times of the Gentiles” (Luke 21:24, 27).

In the third major portion of this vision Daniel saw the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, approaching the Ancient of Days, God the Father.

C. The Son of Man 7:13-14

- 13 “I kept looking in the night visions,
And behold, with the clouds of heaven
One like a Son of Man was coming,
And He came up to the Ancient of Days
And was presented before Him.
- 14 “And to Him was given dominion,
Glory and a kingdom,
That all the peoples, nations, and men of every language
Might serve Him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion
Which will not pass away;
And His kingdom is one
Which will not be destroyed.

Jesus Christ, taking the title “Son of Man” from this prophecy, often

used it to refer to Himself during His earthly ministry. When the Son of Man was brought before the Ancient of Days, all the authority, glory, and sovereign power that had been exercised by rulers in the four Gentile kingdoms over all peoples, nations, and men of every language (cf. Dan. 3:4, 7; 4:1; 5:19; 6:25) was conferred on Him and those peoples worshiped Him. This is in keeping with the Father's promise to the Son in Psalm 2:6-9, and will be fulfilled at Christ's Second Advent (Matt. 24:30; 25:31; Rev. 11:15).

The Son of Man will establish an everlasting dominion or kingdom (cf. Dan. 4:34; 7:27). That kingdom will never be conquered by another (cf. 6:26). His reign will be established on earth (Rev. 20:1-6). At the expiration of the 1,000 years of the Lord's millennial reign, He will surrender the kingdoms of this world to God the Father, after which Christ will be appointed as Ruler over God's eternal kingdom forever (1 Cor. 15:24-28).

Closing prayer

Closing song: His Eye Is On The Sparrow